

# Sociology Graduate Student Handbook

Revised 08/17

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Greetings from the Graduate Coordinator .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Faculty and Areas of Specialization .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Application Process.....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1. Graduate School Application and Requirements.....	3
3.2. Department of Sociology Graduate Admission Requirements.....	3
3.3. Department of Sociology Graduate Degree Requirements.....	4
3.4. Dismissal and Transfer to Non-Degree Status.....	4
<b>4. Program Structure and Project Expectations.....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1. Justification/Purpose.....	6
4.2. Process/Implementation.....	6
4.3. Project Expectations and Format .....	7
4.4. Course Sequencing.....	8
4.5. Two-Year Program Scenario .....	9
<b>5. Graduate Assistantships.....</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1. Graduate Assistantships (GA).....	10
5.2. GA Application Process and Re-Appointment.....	10
5.3. Duties and Responsibilities.....	11
5.4. Hours.....	11

## **1. GREETINGS FROM THE GRADUATE COORDINATOR:**

On behalf of the Department of Sociology, I welcome you to the Sociology Graduate Student Handbook. The information below is provided for both currently enrolled graduate students and individuals who would like more information about graduate studies in the Sociology Department. As Graduate Coordinator, I am responsible for screening applicants for admission, recruiting new students, academic advising, assigning Graduate Assistantships (GA), and arbitrating any general problems that involve graduate students. So if you have any questions about our program, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

The Department of Sociology offers a Master of Arts degree with both a thesis and non-thesis option. Listed below is information on the application process for admission and the program requirements. The department also offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantships (GA) that provide a stipend and partial waiver of tuition. We are a small program - on average, the department has about ten full-time graduate students enrolled each year.

The MA program in sociology is a highly structured course of study involving several core courses which must be completed in a specific order. Each of these required courses provides foundational research skills in theory, methodology and statistics in order to prepare our students for employment or to pursue a doctoral program of study. WSU's sociology department emphasizes a social justice perspective, and students develop insights about the effects of social structures on individual lives and communities. For example, faculty research focuses on issues such as teen dating violence, sexual minority well-being, runaway youth, gentrification, educational policy, and caregiving in later life. Programs prepare students for employment in a number of different fields: graduates work in a number of different research positions and non-profit agencies, and many have gone on to competitive PhD programs across the nation.

If you have any questions, you may contact me through any of the methods below:

Dr. Jennifer Pearson, Graduate Coordinator  
Wichita State University  
Department of Sociology, Campus Box 25  
1845 Fairmount  
Wichita, KS 67260-0025

Email: [jennifer.pearson@wichita.edu](mailto:jennifer.pearson@wichita.edu)  
Phone: (316)978-7145

## **2. GRADUATE FACULTY AND AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION:**

### **Full-time Faculty**

**Chase M. Billingham** (Ph.D., Northeastern University). Assistant Professor. Urban sociology, education, racial stratification, public policy, quantitative methods.

**Jodie L. Hertzog** (Ph.D., Purdue University). Department Chair and Associate Professor. Family, Sexuality, Gender, Intimate Violence, Work-Family Interface. Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

**Twyla J. Hill** (Ph.D., University of California-Irvine). Professor. Sociology of Aging, Sociology of Families, Sociology of Law, Research Methods.

**Jennifer Pearson** (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin). Associate Professor. Graduate Coordinator. Gender and Sexuality, Education, Adolescence and the Transition to Adulthood.

**Kathleen M. O'Flaherty Perez** (Ph.D., Purdue University). Associate Professor. Research Methods, Urban, Demography.

**Lisa Thrane** (Ph. D., Iowa State University). Associate Professor. Deviance, Mental Health, Homeless and Runaway Youth, Research Methods.

### **Affiliated Faculty**

**Charles S. Koeber** (Ph.D., State University of New York, Binghamton). Associate Dean and Associate Professor. Job Loss, Work, Labor Process, Labor Markets, Stratification/Inequality, Consumption.

**Ronald R. Matson** (Ph.D., University of Colorado). Dean and Associate Professor. Gender, American Male, Intimacy, Parenting.

**David W. Wright** (Ph.D., Purdue University). Associate Vice President for Academic Data Systems and Strategic Planning and Professor. Stratification and Class Analysis, Marxism, Employment and Income, Theory, Graduate Data Management and Statistics.

### **Adjunct/Part-time Graduate Faculty**

**Jodie Simon** (MA, Wichita State University).

**Shirlene Small** (MA, Wichita State University).

### **3. APPLICATION PROCESS:**

#### **3.1. Graduate School Application and Requirements:**

Students who wish to pursue graduate education in the department of Sociology must first apply to the WSU Graduate School [online](#). This application is then forwarded to and screened by the graduate coordinator in the department of Sociology. Each applicant must submit official transcripts of all previous academic work, including credits earned at community colleges or work transferred to another institution. Instructions for how to submit official transcripts are provided in the [Admission](#) section of the WSU Online Graduate Catalog.

The minimum graduate school requirements are:

- Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution or a recognized institution in another country whose requirements for the bachelor's degree are substantially equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree.
- Grade point average of at least 2.750, including any postbachelor's graduate work
- No more than 9 credit hours of background deficiencies in the desired field of graduate study.
- Proof of English proficiency may be required for U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are non-native English speakers. The International Applicants section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) provides more information about these requirements.

The Graduate School offers two admission statuses, degree and nondegree, to accommodate qualified students desiring to pursue graduate degrees as well as those simply desiring to earn graduate credit for personal and professional reasons. See the [Admission Requirements](#) section of the WSU Online Graduate Catalog for more complete information on the above requirements and the degree level options.

#### **3.2. Department of Sociology Graduate Admission Requirements:**

In addition to the Graduate School requirements for admission, the Department of Sociology requires:

- Grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 based upon the last 60 hours of course work
- One college algebra course
- At least 15 hours in sociology including:
  - an introductory sociology course
  - one descriptive and inferential statistics course
  - two research methods courses, and
  - one theory course
  - (similar courses in other fields of study may be substituted at the discretion of the graduate coordinator)
- Three letters of reference from professors who are familiar with the student's academic course work
- A typed, double-spaced statement of purpose (approximately 500 words) articulating the student's area of research interests and academic/career goals.

### 3.3. Department of Sociology Graduate Degree Options and Requirements:

The department offers both a thesis and non-thesis option. Unique among most graduate programs, the thesis and non-thesis options in the Department of Sociology are similar in required course work, level of difficulty, content and written structure. Both options require the completion of an individual research project and submission of a final document (see expectations and requirements below). The primary difference between the two options is that the thesis option requires you to form a thesis committee (two members from the Sociology Department and one outside member from another WSU department), pass an oral defense, and produce a document that meets Graduate School format requirements. The non-thesis option on the other hand, though similar in content and structure, does not require the creation of a committee or an oral defense.

**Thesis Option:** Students in the thesis program must complete a total of 32 credit hours, including:

SOC 860	Proseminar	3
SOC 801	Application of Advanced Statistical Techniques	3
SOC 811	Advanced Research: Quantitative Methods	3
SOC 812	Advanced Research: Qualitative Methods	3
SOC 845	Seminar in Sociological Theory	3
SOC 875/876	Thesis Hours	6
	800-level seminar	3
	Electives (or prerequisites if required)	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>

**Non-Thesis Option:** The non-thesis program allows more flexibility in required coursework (with Graduate Coordinator approval) but with a total of 34 credit hours. Expectations for this coursework include:

SOC 860	Proseminar	3
SOC 801	Application of Advanced Statistical Techniques	3
SOC 811	Advanced Research: Quantitative Methods	3
SOC 812	Advanced Research: Qualitative Methods	3
SOC 845	Seminar in Sociological Theory	3
SOC 851	Project Hours	6
	Two 800-level seminars	6
	Electives (or prerequisites if required)	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>

### 3.4. Dismissal and Transfer to Non-Degree Status:

A Sociology graduate student may be dismissed from the program for any of the following reasons:

- student's GPA drops below 2.00
- student does not make satisfactory progress toward degree completion

- student enters the program on probationary status and fails to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.00 after nine hours of course work
- student is placed on probation and fails to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.00 after nine hours of course work
- student violates the [Student Code of Conduct](#) as outlined in the WSU Policies and Procedures Manual

A Sociology graduate student in full-standing may be transferred to non-degree status for any of the following reasons:

- student does not enroll in any sociology course work for more than 12 months
- student fails to enroll within 12 months after admission into the program
- student fails to receive consent of the instructor for any Independent/Directed Study course
- student fails to receive their advisor's expressed approval for course enrollment
- student does not exhibit satisfactory progress in their program as evidenced by low GPA (under 3.00), excessive incompletes, insufficient class attendance, and/or failure to meet the six year completion limit

## **4. PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND THESIS EXPECTATIONS**

### **4.1 Justification/Purpose:**

In general, Master-level programs in sociology should provide a solid foundation in methodological processes, statistical practices and theoretical paradigms. This foundation provides equally for students who desire to pursue a Ph.D. and those who will seek employment in the private or government sector. In either scenario, the student must possess methodological and statistical skills as well as an understanding of how these skills are framed by discourse (theory). The purpose of our program is to provide instruction and mentoring in the development of these skills. Upon mastering the tools of sociology through the MA program, students have flexibility to either begin doing sociology or pursue independent research at the Ph.D. level.

In order to accomplish this objective, the department has developed a curricular program that provides the opportunity to streamline instruction and the acquisition of skills. The focus of our program is “Doing Sociology” – either through research or in an applied setting. Graduate students will receive guidance in accessing data for the development of their thesis/non-thesis research projects, and courses will use data as a primary mechanism of instruction or practice. Such an approach allows the program curriculum to merge content and theme, assist students in making decisions about thesis/non-thesis projects, and provide opportunity for creativity by allowing students flexibility in developing research questions.

### **4.2 Process/Implementation:**

Graduate students are encouraged to develop and commit to an area of research interest in their first semester. Additionally, students are expected to explore potential datasets suitable to their thesis/non-thesis projects. In their second year, students will access these data to produce the empirical results for their thesis/non-thesis projects.

Our program provides instruction, mentoring, and technology needed to develop skills and pursue independent research. For example, the department provides access to several nationally representative large-scale datasets, and students receive instruction on data management and analysis in order to work with these data. The availability of these data is beneficial for graduate students, faculty and the department. For the graduate student, access to these data means that the completion time of thesis and non-thesis projects is shortened since students are not hindered by collecting their own data. Since the databases have national recognition and are often used in academic research, they provide opportunities for students to publish thesis and non-thesis projects. Students may also use other publically available datasets with the approval of their faculty advisor and the graduate coordinator. This option allows greater flexibility in topic and additional opportunities to pursue independent research. Regardless of which option is chosen, our focus is on quality data for research as the mechanism for exploring theoretical questions using the scientific method.

Students may also have the option of collecting their own data. With faculty approval and in consultation with their major advisor, students may identify their own data collection methods, which may include surveys, experiments, participatory analysis, or case studies to name a few. Students who are seeking a non-thesis option may also elect to utilize data from internships or



cooperative education assignments. In addition, students may elect to work jointly with faculty on data collection projects that faculty are currently undertaking.

All the required graduate courses are tied together in both content and output with each course addressing a different component of the final thesis or non-thesis document. The sequence of the curriculum including course content and requirements is predicated on the structure of the standard journal article: identification of the research problem (SOC 860), a literature review of the scholarly work and alternative theoretical models (SOC 845; SOC 851/SOC 875), documentation of the data and methodology (SOC 801; SOC 811; SOC 812), and the presentation of the findings and implication for future research (SOC 851/SOC 876) (see section 4.5 below for a brief description and sequence of each required graduate course). Requiring thesis and non-thesis projects to follow the organization, structure, and format of a standard journal article in the discipline of Sociology enhances opportunities for publication.

Finally, the department provides access to data and statistical software for the completion of thesis and non-thesis projects. The Sociology Graduate Student Computer Lab provides computers equipped with statistical software (SPSS), Microsoft Office, and Adobe Acrobat that students can use to complete course assignments and thesis projects. Access to these systems is restricted and requires passwords and a signed security agreement.

#### **4.3. Project Expectations and Format:**

Graduate students are expected to follow disciplinary and department norms in producing the final document for their thesis/non-thesis project. For both the thesis and non-thesis options, students are expected to organize their final written document along the lines of a typical research journal article which replicates the scientific method: an introduction, literature review, composite theory/model and hypotheses, methodology statement, results of analysis, and a conclusion. Below is an example of a detailed outline that follows this organizational structure.

1. Introduction
  - a. Significance of topic
  - b. Brief review of literature
  - c. Composite theory/model and data used for project
2. Literature review and Theoretical Framework
  - a. Relevant theories/schools of thought
  - b. Synthesis of relevant literature
  - c. Composite theory/model and hypotheses (if appropriate)
3. Data/Methodology
  - a. Data
    - i. Source of data
    - ii. Description of sampling procedures and data collection
    - iii. Original sample size
    - iv. Sample restrictions
    - v. Population weights (if appropriate)
  - b. Variables
    - i. Dependent variable (description, coding validity issues)
    - ii. Independent variables (description, coding validity issues)

- iii. Control variables (description, coding validity issues)
  - c. Methodology
    - i. Hypotheses (if appropriate)
    - ii. Type of analysis (with link to research questions/hypotheses)
- 4. Results
  - a. Table(s)
  - b. Discussion and interpretation of findings presented in tables
- 5. Discussion
  - a. Highlight significant findings
  - b. Confirmation status of hypotheses (if appropriate)
  - c. Interpretation (link back to theoretical model and previous research)
  - d. Limitations of study
  - e. Policy implications
- 6. Bibliography

#### **4.4. Course Sequencing:**

The core courses of the Sociology graduate curriculum should generally be taken in the following order:

860 ProSeminar (FALL): Along with the currently established course content, the 860 ProSeminar will introduce graduate students to the discipline, MA Program, and thesis requirements. At the conclusion of this course, students will be expected to have identified a research topic and question.

812 Advanced Research: Qualitative Methods (FALL): Graduate students will deepen their understanding of the research process as they are introduced to qualitative methods, methodology, and analysis. Students will learn to address methodological issues by developing a pilot project requiring them to apply their understanding of qualitative methods, sampling, and coding. Through this process, students will be prepared to compare the strengths and limitations of quantitative-, qualitative-, and mixed-method approaches while becoming critical consumers of qualitative research.

845 Seminar in Sociological Theory (SPRING): This seminar provides a comprehensive survey of contemporary sociological theory and its relationship to its roots in classical sociological theory. Emphasis will be placed on applying contemporary sociological theory to current sociological phenomena, including topics used in students' thesis or non-thesis projects.

811 Advanced Research: Quantitative Methods (SPRING): This course provides graduate students with the conceptual tools and methodological skills needed to conduct quantitative sociological research. Students will be introduced to sampling, measurement, and data management issues. In addition, students will gain experience with statistical software packages using small and large-scale datasets.

801 Application of Advanced Statistical Techniques (FALL): Along with the currently established course content, the 801 Seminar will cover the following topics: use of statistical

software for data preparation and analysis; development of SPSS code for data analysis; preparation and cleaning of data; performing SPSS procedures for data analysis. At the conclusion of this course (and SOC 811), students will be expected to have completed the data and methodological sections of their thesis/non-thesis document.

851 Directed Research (non-thesis students); 875-876 Thesis (thesis students) (FALL;SPRING):

In the first semester, students will be expected to have written a literature review, including a composite model and hypotheses for their thesis/non-thesis projects. In the second semester, students will be expected to perform statistical analysis using the models and statistics developed in previous seminars to complete the remaining sections of the thesis document. In addition, thesis students will develop a presentation for their oral defense.

**4.5. Two-Year Program Scenario:**

While the progress of any individual student toward completion of their degree is unique, the Sociology graduate program is based on a two-year program that would typically involve the following events per semester:

1. FALL semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year
  - a. SOC860 Proseminar
  - b. SOC812 Advanced Research: Qualitative Methods
  - c. Electives or deficiencies if required
  - d. Define area of research interest, begin to develop topic for project
2. SPRING semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year
  - a. SOC845 Seminar in Sociological Theory
  - b. SOC811 Advanced Research: Quantitative Methods
  - c. Electives or deficiencies if required
  - d. Complete Plan of Study
  - e. Commit to an area of research interest and identify appropriate data
  - f. Determine major advisor (and committee members for thesis option)
3. FALL semester, 2<sup>nd</sup> year
  - a. SOC801 Application of Advanced Statistical Techniques
  - b. Thesis/Project Hours (851 non-thesis; 875 thesis)
  - c. Electives
  - d. Prepare and analyze data for your thesis or non-thesis project
  - e. Complete literature review and data/ methods sections of thesis/non-thesis project
  - f. Review policies and procedures for thesis documents and defense (thesis option)
4. SPRING semester, 2<sup>nd</sup> year
  - a. Thesis/Project hours (851,876)
  - b. Electives
  - c. Complete data analysis for project
  - d. Complete remaining sections of document (results and discussion sections)
  - e. Update Plan of Study (check on any incompletes)
  - f. Submit application for Degree (see Graduate School deadlines)
  - g. Thesis students - Schedule and complete Oral Defense (see Graduate School deadlines)

- h. Thesis/Non-thesis Project Approval (see Department and Graduate School policies)

While the program is based on a two year, four semester cycle, some students may complete their degrees on a different timeline. Any variations must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

## **5. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS:**

### **5.1. Graduate Assistantships:**

The department offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantships (GA) each year on a competitive basis. These awards are made through funding provided by the Graduate School and the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. These positions serve as apprenticeships for teaching and/or research in sociology. GTAs are provided a monthly stipend and a partial tuition waiver of up to 75% and a 10% discount on books purchased for classes. Each GTA is assigned to one or more faculty members and given office space and other university privileges.

Throughout their tenure as a GTA, each person can be assigned to various faculty members to assist in their teaching and research. This is meant to give exposure to various faculty styles of teaching and research activities. Depending on the courses taught and the interest of the GTA, faculty members are encouraged to allow their GTA to give one or more guest lectures. Faculty members are also encouraged to monitor student lectures and grading and to provide constructive feedback to the student.

### **5.2. GTA Application Process and Terms of Re-Appointment:**

Students who wish to apply for a GTA must submit an application to the Graduate Coordinator. This application may be found on the Graduate School [website](#). The number of GTA positions offered depends on available funding (approximately 8 positions have been available each year in recent years). The selection process is competitive and award decisions are made by the Sociology Graduate Admissions Committee each Spring for the following academic year. The following criteria are utilized for the awarding of GTA positions:

- GPA (undergraduate or current graduate coursework)
- Background and coursework in Sociology
- Strength of recommendation letters
- Ability to perform the duties of a GTA and meet the needs of faculty in the areas of teaching and research
- Review of other admission application materials (such as the personal statement)

Graduate Students who have been awarded a GTA position may re-apply when the terms of their current GTA position expires (NOTE: There is a four-semester limit on GTA positions per student). The following criteria are utilized for awarding GTA positions to current students:

- GPA of 3.00 or higher
- Satisfactory progress toward degree completion
- Satisfactory recommendations from supervising faculty
- Continuing ability to perform the duties of a GTA and meet the needs of faculty in the areas of teaching and research

### **5.3. Duties and Responsibilities:**

Duties and responsibilities will vary depending on the faculty members to whom the GTA is assigned. In general, GTAs are expected to become familiar with the Sociology department and its resources in order to assist students and faculty with research and academic functions. GTAs also are expected to rotate with other GTAs in coverage of the department office if necessary throughout the semester. The duties and responsibilities GTAs may be expected to perform are:

- attend lectures of the faculty member they are assisting
- design, administer, and grade exams and homework assignments
- prepare and present classroom lectures
- hold office hours to meet with students regarding lecture/exam information
- develop bibliographies for faculty or office resources
- assist faculty through campus library research for classes, presentations, and research
- assist in curriculum development and evaluation
- provide support to the department (office coverage, tabling at events, etc)
- assist with departmental projects (such as developing recruitment materials or assembling information regarding the job market, PhD programs, etc)

GTAs are prohibited from grading coursework of their graduate student peers.

General information about graduate assistantships and Graduate School policies will be covered in a mandatory GTA workshop each year. Please see the Graduate School's [University Assistantship Policies](#) for more information.

### **5.4. Hours:**

GTAs are expected to work a set number of hours per week (i.e., 10, 15, 20) for the entire semester. The number of hours to be worked will be outlined in the contract for employment. In general, GTAs will find that some weeks you will put in all your assigned hours, other weeks you will put in less. The Graduate School forbids GTAs from putting in more hours than what they are assigned. All GTAs are expected to keep a ledger of their hours and duties to be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator on a weekly basis.